

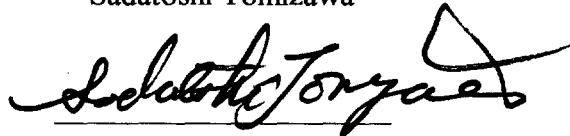
Preparing for Life in Japan:  
A Handbook for the American planning to live with a Japanese Family

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sadatoshi Tomizawa", written over a horizontal line.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project is to make a practical guide for American students living within the Japanese culture, whether it be for a few days or even a year. I feel it is important to have an introduction to the culture that is useful and easy to use.

I spent a few weeks in Japan as a delegation member of the 1995 Far East Exchange Program Summer Study Tour and discovered that I really did not know as much about the culture as I thought I did. When I returned to the United States and learned more about the Japanese culture, I discovered all kinds of things I could have done differently.

During the next school year, I worked with students going on the same trip I had taken to try to get them prepared for the culture differences they would experience. I found that they were most interested in what to do and what not to do within the context of the unfamiliar culture. I tried in this paper to compile information on Japan that would be helpful in that respect.

What follows is a brief and general introduction to Japanese culture and highlights of things I thought were important in order to understand the Japanese way of living and thinking. I also went into some specific detail and further description of DOs and DON'Ts that a guest should know in order to acclimate themselves to Japanese society. These DOs and DON'Ts have been translated in the appendix to benefit those studying the language.

While people the world over are virtually the same, they have different customs, beliefs, behaviors, and even ways of thinking. It is possible to visit another country as a tourist and not learn anything about its culture. It is very exciting, however, if you try to learn about the culture and become a part of that society as much as possible. The only way to really understand another culture is to live and participate in it. When preparing to enter a new culture, it is important to know as much information about that culture as possible; otherwise, it is very difficult to understand why the natives do the things they do.

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## THE JAPANESE NATION

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### A General Background of Japan

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Japan is a series of islands, which is called an archipelago. The archipelago is made up of hundreds of islands which includes four main islands: Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Shikoku. Since the majority of Japan is mountainous, much of the land is uninhabitable. The long expanse of islands stretch through several climate zones. Also, the climate is different depending upon which side of the mountain range you live. Since Japan was cut off from mainland Asia, and as a result of past government-regulated isolation, a generally homogeneous nation was created.



## History



Japan's flag symbolizes a nation that has historically been known as the "Land of the Rising Sun." Even continuing to the present, Japan has had a line of emperors that began more than two thousand years ago. *Shoguns*, or feudal lords, however, controlled politics from the 12th century until the 19th century and all foreigners were sent out of Japan in the 17th century because the shoguns suspected them of being spies for European armies. The Japanese did not have contact with the West again until Commodore Matthew Perry from the United States Navy arrived in 1853. Around the 1860s the shoguns began to lose power and the emperor regained control over Japan. The current emperor is Akihito, who succeeded his father Hirohito in 1989.

After winning military battles against China in 1895 and against Russia in 1905, Japan became militarily powerful in its region. Japan gained global influence through its involvement in World War I, and its land holdings were increased as a result of the Treaty of Versailles. The years following the war were prosperous and the nation had changed quickly. Not long after those years, Japan demonstrated its influence in Asia and invaded Manchuria and much of China; its successful military subsequently surrounded most of Southeast Asia. The U. S. Naval forces were attacked by Japan on December 7, 1941. Japan's military strength, however, began dwindling in 1943. Then in 1945, the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were destroyed by atomic bombs dropped by the U. S. The empire collapsed and the nation was occupied from 1945 to 1952 by military forces mainly from the U. S. In 1947, the Americans oversaw Japan's adoption of a new constitution which renounced war, granted basic human rights, and declared that Japan was a democracy. Since then, the U. S. and

Japan have had close political and military ties, even though trade negotiations have been tense (Culturgram 1-2).

Since WWII, Japan has focused on economic development and consequently has been able to change and modernize very quickly. Politics have been mainly controlled by the Liberal Democratic Party. The emperor does not have much actual power, but remains a very important figure-head to the Japanese people.



## Religion



An important aspect of Japan is religious background. The Japanese are considered to be inclusive of foreign influences, often adopting and adapting to certain elements of foreign cultures. In Japan, however, organized religion does not govern family life and philosophy to the extent that some ethical codes do. For example, human failure is generally considered to be the cause of ethical imperfections.

Historically, rice agriculture has had a big influence on religious life in Japan. For example, many of the ancient religious rites centered around seasonal celebrations associated with agricultural fertility. Traditional Japanese religion can be characterized as focusing on the following qualities: “Mutual interaction among several religious traditions,” an “Intimate relationship between man and the gods and the sacredness of nature,” “The religious significance of the family and ancestor,” “Purification as a basic principle of religious life,” “Festivals as the major means of religious celebration,” and “Close relationship between religion and state” (Kodansha Intl. 202-5).

Although many religions have been adopted in Japan, Shinto is Japan’s native religion. In the Shinto religion, *kami*, also known as the gods, are the “focus of ritual worship and celebration” (Allen and Watanabe 114). The Japanese have a very close relationship to the *kami*. They believe the *kami* are as much or more a part of nature and the lives of humans as they are a different world (Kodansha Intl. 203-4).

The *torii* is the gate-like structure that is important to a Shinto shrine because it indicates where the sacred space is near the shrine. The *torii* itself is often thought of as the symbol of the Shinto shrine (Allen and Watanabe 133).



Near the Shinto shrine you will find water basins which are there for the purpose of ritual purification before going near the main sanctuary to pray. The dippers are to be used to rinse your hands for the representative cleansing. Visitors to the shrine may then ring the bell by pulling the long rope found attached to the center of the shrine, and then they are to clap their hands twice and silently say their prayers with their head bowed (Allen and Watanabe 133).



## Life



When preparing for a lengthy stay in Japan, it is important to know about Japanese customs and annual events. Some of the most important rituals are observed around the New Year, and they are often the most elaborate of Japanese yearly events. Some observances and rituals include decorating and cleaning your house, making visits to a shrine or temple, and formally calling on family and friends. *Matsuri* (festivals) and *Nenchugyoji* (annual events) are two primary categories into which other festivals, holidays, and ceremonial affairs fall. *Matsuri* are indigenous Japanese festivals of Shinto background which occur each year on preset dates. *Nenchugyoji* includes many other yearly and seasonal holidays or rituals, many of which come from Chinese and Buddhist influence (Kodansha Intl. 219, 222).

Buddhist rites dictate around ninety percent of funerals in Japan. Weddings in Japan have become elaborate affairs, some of which are celebrated by the Christian, or Western, tradition, and others which are inclusive of many traditions. It is still popular in Japan to have formal meetings of prospective marriage partners (*miai*), arranged by a go-between (*nakodo*). It is not to say that the prospective partners do not have a say in who they marry. The *miai* is preferred to ensure that the union will be acceptable to all those involved. In Japan, the marriage union is not considered just a joining of two people, but the joining of two families (Kodansha Intl. 226-27).

Japanese gardens are an important part of Japan's cultural background because they demonstrate one of the ways the Japanese celebrate the beauty of nature as well as the Japanese aesthetic. Japanese gardens are made up of various elements that come together to create a unique beauty. They convey a "compositional beauty derived from a blending of

natural plantings, sand, water, and rock,” they use the “natural beauty of Japan's landscape [and] seasonal change,” and they demonstrate symbolic beauty arising from the expression of Shinto beliefs and Buddhist intellectual conventions” (Kodansha Intl. 268).

Japanese flower arrangements (*ikebana*) are more than decorations, they have become a “highly developed art” (Allen and Watanabe 45). The original use of the Japanese flower arrangement was for Buddhist flower offerings. Beginning in the 15th century, however, many different styles of arrangement developed, and, consequently, the need for schools to teach these styles. Today, there are 3 main styles taught and more than 3,000 schools that teach *ikebana* (Kodansha Intl. 335-37). There are several things to focus on when doing Japanese flower arranging, such as the kind of plant material and which container to use, the arrangement of the branches, and how the branches relate to the container and the space around it. You will generally find one of these flower arrangements sitting in the alcove in a Japanese-style room.

The ancient tradition of the tea ceremony (*sādo*) is still practiced in modern Japan. Sometimes it is referred to as “Way of tea.” *Sādo* is most often learned by Japanese women and includes a certain measure of very formalized, perfected movements and ceremonial behavior. It seems to be an intricate and complex way of making tea, but in fact is thought of as a spiritual discipline inspired by Zen Buddhism. The main goal of perfecting the art of making tea is to “develop peace within oneself and the world, respect for life, and the ability to cherish the uniqueness of every moment” (Allen and Watanabe 97). In summary, the tea ceremony in Japan is “a social act founded on reverence for all life and all things, [and it] is enacted in an idealized environment to create a perfect life. Its quiet atmosphere of harmony and respect for people and objects, with attention to cleanliness and order, strives to bring peace to body and spirit” (Kodansha Intl. 335).

The traditional garment worn by the Japanese is called a *kimono*. Today, Western-style clothing is becoming more popular than the *kimono* because it is more comfortable and less restrictive, as well as cheaper and easier to care for. You may still see *kimonos* worn during holidays, weddings, visits to shrines and temples, tea gatherings, and traditional musical or theatrical events. *Kimonos* are generally made from a set pattern but may have different colors, textures, and designs. The color is often determined by the age and sex of the wearer, as well as the season in which it is worn. There are several important accessories to the *kimono*: the “sash-like” *obi*, which can be tied several ways; clips, cords, and Velcro to hold the *kimono* and *obi* together; the *tabi*, which are a kind of sock usually made of a heavy and smooth cloth with an “indent” between the big toe and the next toe; and the *zori*, which is a “sandal-like thong” that is worn with the *tabi* (Allen and Watanabe 126-27).

June, the first month of summer in Japan, brings with it the rainy season (*tsuyu*). This is a time of escalated humidity, calm showers, and light mists, all of which take a toll on clothing, food, and dwellings. June is also a time for a change in wardrobes. Lightweight summer uniforms are worn by school children rather than wool winter ones. When *tsuyu* has passed, it is common for people to begin freshening their clothes, discarding spoiled food, and cleaning their house after prolonged humid and moldy conditions (Allen 155).

The cherry blossom (*sakura*), which has a very short life span, is very important to the Japanese. The *sakura* symbolizes “the uniqueness and preciousness of the moment, the change and flow of life, purity and simplicity” (Allen and Watanabe 142). National weather reports even forecast what part of the country will be able to see the blooms at what time, as the “cherry blossom front” moves from one end of the nation to the other according to climatic changes. The Japanese celebrate the cherry blossoms each year by having picnics and parties with family, friends and co-workers under cherry trees that are in full bloom.



## Education



A Japanese classroom is more than a place for study. In the school, the children will help serve hot lunches to their classmates, and will also sweep and mop their classroom at the end of the day. The textbooks that the students are issued are theirs to keep. Each day they transport their books by using a *randoseru*, which is a bag made out of a good leather (Allen and Watanabe 148). Cram schools called *juku* are popular places for students to go after regular school lets out. Many students find these cram schools necessary for getting the extra instruction needed to do well on college entrance examinations, and therefore, they put up with the long hours of schooling each day. Some *juku* specialize in such subjects as the arts and sports (Allen and Watanabe 97).



### Structure of Japanese Society



To really understand what lies ahead, it is necessary to know some background information about Japanese society. First of all, Japan is made up of a mostly homogeneous population with a common history and many years of traditions that have been passed on through the generations. Japan is a group-oriented society which is based on a strong sense of hierarchy, and the good of the group is most often put ahead of individual preferences. Overall, remember that the Japanese find it very unpleasant to “lose face” or to be “shamed” in public, and they have great respect for age and tradition (Culturgram 2).

Having a group-oriented society means that the group is a more important reference than individual characteristics. One example that shows this characteristic is the way the Japanese answer the question, “Who is ...?” The Japanese think first of who that person is in relation to which groups he or she belongs. This may include such things as what company he or she works for, or in which community he or she lives. On the other hand, an American, who lives in individualistic society, is more likely to think of a personal identification factor unrelated to a group, such as a person’s name.

There are also other characteristics of a group-oriented society. The individual becomes dependant on the group to fulfill some of his or her needs, such as the desire to belong. Strong group-orientation requires that there is emotional participation in group-loyalty and family-like attachments which create a sense of obligation and cohesive “oneness.” You will find that the Japanese place great emphasis on the sense of obligation that their culture has deemed important (Nakane 15-19). This group orientation also plays a part in the need to have a consensus when making a decision that affects the group. The

Japanese will discuss all alternatives and undergo rather lengthy discussions if necessary until a consensus is reached (Kodansha Intl. 309-10).

Stability within each group, which is made up of a rigid vertical structure, is the basis for harmony in Japanese society. Concerning the internal structure of Japanese groups, you will find that each group shares “a common structure, an internal organization by which the members are tied vertically into a delicately graded order” (Nakane 23). One person is always above the other in status and no two people in society are equal. This allows a smooth flowing ranking system which strengthens and makes possible strong group systems. In Japanese Society, Nakane mentions that every group in Japan inevitably develops vertical structure because, “the existence of equally competing powers is a most unstable situation in Japan; stability always resides in an imbalance between powers where one dominates the others” (53). Merit is generally not a determining factor in the Japanese hierarchial system. Rather, factors such as age, date of entry in a company, college attended, year of graduation, family background, and gender all play a role in determining this vertical structure.

The group interdependency found in Japanese society is established according to the perceived fact that one person is basically dependent on others that coexist around them. Consequently, in order to get along with others, it is necessary to censor unfriendly feelings and to act in a way that displays social compatibility. It seems as though it would be difficult to always think, feel, and act in a way that is permissible. It is not always essential, however, that feelings and actions be in sync, only that the socially acceptable outward behaviors take precedence over one's own feelings. Thus, it is essential that the Japanese be conscious of an incongruity between actual feelings and external actions and be able to assume feelings while conducting themselves as if there were no contradiction. This may sound easy, but it is often difficult to carry out, which is why it is sometimes necessary to have a “go-between” to

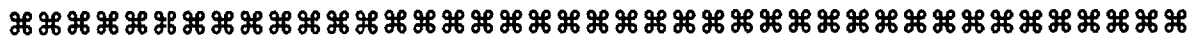
oversee delicate negotiations (Kodansha Intl. 309).

There are certain ways a Japanese person is expected to behave, as demonstrated by an intricate code of etiquette. There is a strong “social expectation to learn and conform to rules of etiquette” (Kodansha Intl. 309). The social organization in Japan is laid out by a concrete set of rules that say which actions are suitable for each status level in many social situations. Japanese etiquette specifically refers to an older person getting respect from a younger person, as well as a male getting respect from a female. Status differences are also shown in patterns of speech used in the Japanese language. For example, a more formal pattern of speech will be used by an “inferior” to a “superior.” The Japanese language also includes an “elaborate set of expressions indicating different degrees of respect” (Kodansha Intl. 309). Other ways social interactions are made easier by this code of ethics are: the wearing of clothes such as uniforms, the exchange of business cards (which is an important source of status information), and sitting guests in a distinguishing order, such as placing a person of higher social status nearest to the *tokonoma* in a traditional Japanese room (Kodansha Intl. 309).

One particular Japanese social relationship that demonstrates the reality of Japan's hierarchy system is the *senpai/kōhai* relationship. It is a status-based relationship where the "senior" and "junior" in a group each have particular roles. It is reciprocal in nature, in that "older, experienced members offer friendship, assistance, and advice to inexperienced members," while younger members show "gratitude, respect, and, often, personal loyalty." Most Japanese organizations utilize these relationships (Kodansha Intl. 309-10).

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## A JAPANESE HOME STAY



### In Japan



Japanese hospitality is wonderful. If you are a guest, most likely you will receive special treatment. If you are living with a middle class family largely influenced by Western culture, you may be offered the opportunity to experience traditional culture as a courtesy! For example, you may be given a traditional Japanese *adzuki* pillow, as well as an American style one (Allen and Watanabe 46). A Japanese family may have already planned a lot of things for their guest. It is considered rude to not have things for your guest to do.

As a guest in Japan you probably expect to encounter many new things for the first time. You may see some “strange” gestures used by the Japanese which convey the same meanings that we understand in American society. For example, when talking about oneself a Japanese will gesture towards his or her nose and not towards the chest. When counting, the Japanese begin with their thumb rather than beginning with their index finger and ending with their thumb (Safe and Sound vol. 1). Also, when saying “no” or when humbly refusing a compliment, a Japanese may be seen waving their hand rapidly from side to side (palm outward) in front of their face (Axtell 182).

Several forms of entertainment have become popular in Japan in recent years. You may come across a few of them during your “home stay.” One sport gaining popularity particularly among businessmen is golf. Since golf courses are expensive and space is limited,

however, golf ranges have become a popular place to go to “play” golf. Fireworks are also a popular entertainment source, especially in the summer (Kodansha Intl. 224-25). One other leisure activity that has become popular is *karaoke*, which you can find at bars, pubs, most parties, and also in homes. This involves singing along with lyrics displayed on a monitor.

You may also encounter a few things in public life that may seem strange to you. It may be hard to get used to seeing the Japanese drive on the left side of the road. They drive on the left because, after WWII, the transportation system was set up by the British. In Japan, children may be seen wearing bright colored hats for the purpose of making them more visible to people driving motor vehicles. This is necessary because there are not sidewalks on most narrow neighborhood streets (Allen and Watanabe 142).

Some other things you may see on the street are noodle shops with counters at which you can stand for quick meals, many roadside film stands, and possibly police boxes, which are found on city corners and are useful if you are lost or need other information. If you see a person wearing a mask, he or she may be sick. The Japanese wear masks to keep germs from spreading (Axtell 183, Safe and Sound vol. 3). Also, an assortment of things can be found in Japanese vending machines, such as snacks, pantyhose, cigarettes, juice, coffee, beer, tea, stamps, and even noodles.

The Japanese department store (*depāto*) offers a wide range of things for the consumer. It was not until the early twentieth century, when some private railway companies began stores at the more populated terminals, that the department stores began looking like they do today. Some of them even resemble the mega-stores found popping up all over the U. S., but instead of one floor spreading over a wide area, they are built several floors high. Now, many of the department stores have available such things as lounges, restaurants, coffee shops, playgrounds for children, free delivery for most gift items, gift wrapping, art

exhibitions, concerts, food, and some even offer foreign customer service (Allen and Watanabe 68, Safe and Sound vol. 3).

The transportation systems in Japan are generally very reliable. Even though trains are crowded, they are efficient and always on time. Most bicycles are equipped with bike locks, headlights, and baskets. If you are in walking distance to where you want to go, generally you will walk. Japan is crowded so you will see fewer cars per people than in America.

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- During hot weather in Japan, the handkerchief (*bankachi*) is used to keep faces dry and comfortable. DO NOT blow your nose on your handkerchief.
- DO NOT blow your nose at the table, or in public. It is considered rude.
- The Japanese probably will not knock before entering a room. If you are in a situation where someone enters a room unexpectedly, DO NOT be upset (Safe and Sound vol. 1).
- When bowing from a seated position on the floor, DO place your hands in a triangle on the floor in front of you and bow (Safe and Sound vol. 3).
- When beckoning someone, a Japanese will gesture with his or her hand pointing down while saying "*chotto, chotto*." DO NOT beckon someone by waving with your palm pointing up (Safe and Sound vol. 4).
- If you are a woman, DO NOT sit "Indian style" after sitting on your

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### Families in Japan



When staying with a Japanese family, realize that they may act and even think differently than you do. The Japanese have been brought up with a very Japanese heritage, just as you have experienced your own heritage.

Traditionally, the Japanese family was headed by the male, with the female in charge of household duties. The oldest person generally had the most “prestige,” but the highest status was determined by gender and “specific position of authority.” For example, a retired male who used to be the head of the household may still have had a lot of respect, but very little power. The retiree was usually replaced by his oldest son, who then took over the family responsibility of overseeing financial welfare, the behavior of other family members, the management of family property, and the practice of an occupation such as farming. He was also in charge of arranging suitable and honorable ceremonies for deceased family members (Kodansha Intl. 314). With those responsibilities came authority as well as the expectation that he and his family would live with his parents to ensure the “continuity of the family line.” The oldest son, as the future head of the family, had a higher status than his siblings. If he did not seem to have what it was going to take to be a successful head of a family, however, he might be “replaced” by a younger brother or someone outside of the family. Also, if a bride whose status was lowest in the family was looked upon unfavorably by her in-laws or she did not bear a child, she could have been divorced from that family (Kodansha Intl. 314).

In the modern-day family, generally you will not find an extended family living in the same household, although they may still live close to each other. You will find that many

families are “nuclear” (including a mother, father, and two children), live in a two or three bedroom home, and strive to live up to what are considered “Middle class ideals and standards of living.” In fact, the middle class family is the most prevalent type of family following the “postwar prosperity” known in Japan after World War II (Kodansha Intl. 315).

Following the war there were several legal and social changes which were largely brought about by Western influence. Compared to the traditional family, there are slight differences in the roles of males and females and also in the expectations of siblings. For example, the vast difference in status between siblings of different age and gender is still somewhat prevalent, but it no longer constitutes an overwhelming difference. Likewise, it is not always necessary for the oldest son and his family to live in the same house as his parents, nor is he necessarily obligated to take care of his parents. Generally, the father travels by train to a job far away, and most men spend very long hours each day at their office away from their families, sometimes not returning home until after eleven o’clock at night. Women are still expected to take care of the children and the home, which results in a “nurturing environment” for the family. They are not bound only to that role like they were in the past, however. Now women are finding that they are “freer to pursue education, jobs, and hobbies, and to initiate divorce.” Also, brides do not have to answer to their in-laws as if they were the “absolute authority” (Kodansha Intl. 315).

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- DO remember to respect the routine of the family you are staying with.
- DO realize every family will be different, just as in America. Try to fit into your family situation as well as possible.
- DO watch your hosts and follow their example.

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### Traditional Japanese Homes



Today, there are fewer and fewer traditional Japanese homes. As Japan has modernized, the Western-style home has become popular, but many homes have at least one traditional room (Allen and Watanabe 68). Most middle and upper class homes contain rooms of both Japanese and Western style. In a home that is the traditional Japanese-style, you will find things such as: *tatami*, *tokonoma*, *ikebana*, *susuma*, and *shōji*. Japanese-style homes are designed with practicality in mind. For example, bedding is usually put in the closet during the day so that the room can be transformed into a study, a dining room, or a playroom. Modern housing is built with permanent walls separating each room for its own purpose (Allen and Watanabe 45-46). The following paragraphs include descriptions of what can be found in a traditional Japanese-style home.

The main house is raised one step higher than the level of the entrance (*genkan*). As most foreigners know, it is customary for the Japanese to remove their shoes before entering the main part of the house or other building. Near the doorway of a home, there will usually be shelves or a small closet to store shoes (Allen and Watanabe 45, Safe and Sound vol. 1).

*Shōji* are windows or sliding doors which are made of “wooden lattices covered on one side with white paper.” You would most likely find these along external walls, particularly corridors and windows (Allen and Watanabe 45).

A *fusuma* is a sliding door which is made of a wood frame that is covered on both sides with either decorative paper or paintings of nature scenes. Two of the functions of *fusuma* are separating rooms and making larger rooms by taking them away (Allen and Watanabe 45).

A *tokonoma* is an alcove, a unique indentation in the wall that usually has a raised platform and possibly even a shelf or series of shelves. Traditionally, the purpose of the *tokonoma* is to show art such as hanging scrolls and ceramics, and to display *ikebana* (flower arrangements), dolls, or paintings. Since there is not a lot of room in modern homes, however, other things such as television sets are put there (Allen and Watanabe 45, Safe and Sound vol. 1).

*Tatami* are woven straw mats that are about two inches thick, six feet long, and three feet wide. They may be arranged in several different ways, and usually cover all of the floor area (Allen and Watanabe 45).

The small cabinet (*butsudan*) displayed in many Japanese homes, is a shrine which contains a statue or portrait of the Buddha and the family's ancestral tablets (*ihai*). You may see members of the family placing offerings such as food (rice in particular), incense, and flowers there. Offerings are given to the spirits of family members who have died (Allen and Watanabe 155, Safe and Sound vol. 1).

The conservation of fuel is very important in Japan since 99% of its major fuel resource (petroleum) is imported and thus very costly. As a result of high cost of fuel, central heating in Japanese homes is rare, and kerosene or electric space heaters (*sekiyu-sutōbu*) are used to warm only those rooms which people are using (Allen and Watanabe 98). In the winter, a person may be seen using a *kotatsu*, which is a "small floor-level table or desk with a radiant heating unit attached to its underside." The heat is held in by a blanket which is connected to the *kotatsu* and wraps around the persons legs, keeping them warm (Allen and Watanabe 120).

Since all the tables and desks in a traditional Japanese-style room are low to the ground, a floor cushion (*zabuton*) is used instead of Western style chairs (Allen and



Watanabe 68).

The kitchen (*daidokoro*) in a Japanese home generally contains many small appliances. One that is probably considered a necessity is the rice cooker. This machine cooks rice to perfection and makes enough for each person to have several servings (Allen and Watanabe 106). The primary user of the kitchen in Japan is the mother.

In Japanese homes, there is a small room only for the toilet (*toire*); the bath area and sinks are separate from the toilet area. The toilet may be an American style toilet or a Japanese style squat toilet (Allen and Watanabe 60). If you are staying with an upper to middle class family, the American style toilet may have seat warmers as well as numerous luxury items indicated by various buttons. It may also have a faucet where clean water runs into the tank. You may use this water to rinse your hands after you have used the toilet.

Around city homes there is little space for beautiful lawns. Most Japanese, however, have small gardens called *niwa*. There, the family may have arranged some attractive stones or rocks, interesting plants, strawberries or other fruit or vegetable, or even a *bonsai* tree. Because of a lack of space, you may frequently see laundry hung in the garden. It is important to note, however, that the kind of *niwa* talked about here is not the same as the elegant and distinguished gardens at temples and shrines (Allen and Watanabe 142).

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- DO take your shoes off in the front entryway of the home. DO turn them around so they face the door. If house slippers are provided, wear those.
- If you are given house slippers to wear, DO NOT wear the slippers on floors covered in *tatami* (Allen and Watanabe 60).
- DO NOT step on the seams of *tatami* mats; they are very expensive



## Bathing



Since the system of bathing in Japan is important but somewhat different than the American way, a good amount of space is used here to talk about it. Bathing in Japan is more than just getting clean. The Japanese have a certain reverence for a very hot bath and it is something they look forward to after a long day; they find it relaxing, refreshing, and rejuvenating. The Japanese have always “recognized and appreciated” the “soothing quality of water,” something that Allen and Watanabe say foreigners do not always understand. Nevertheless, the Japanese way of bathing is preferred by most people who spend much time in Japan. The fact that the Japanese like bathing so much can be seen by the prevalence of the hot spring resorts in Japan (81).

The room which holds the bathtub is waterproof. Therefore, it is not necessary to try to keep things dry. It is expected that the room will be soaked, and it is okay because there is a drain in the middle of the tiled or wooden floor. The tub is very deep and short, so that you immerse your entire body up to your head, and is filled so that it overflows when you get in it (Allen and Watanabe 81-82).

Before entering the tub, you should wash. The way the Japanese do this is to first sit on a short stool or mat-covered board which is in the room. Next, fresh water from a hose or faucet near the tub is used to fill a small bucket and you should pour this water over you to get wet or to rinse the soap off of you. Then and only then, you may enter the tub (Allen and Watanabe 81-82).

In Japan, the same bath water is used for the whole family. Most often, the father bathes first, sometimes sharing the bath with his children since it is an opportunity for play.

The mother will bathe last but she may also share the bath with children, especially infants. It may seem odd for everyone to share the same bath water, but since everyone is clean before they enter the water, the water also stays clean. The water stays warm because there is usually a lid to put over the tub in between baths. The family may drain the tub after everyone has bathed that evening or they may leave the water to be reheated for another evening, or even for a whole week (Allen and Watanabe 81-82).

Public bathing is popular in Japan. Generally women and men use separate baths. In more modern public baths, customers may put their personal belongings in a basket or on a shelf and carry their bath items with them into the bathing area (Allen and Watanabe 88).

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- DO wash, scrub, and rinse outside the tub.
- DO NOT bring soap into the tub; the Japanese tub is used only for soaking.
- DO NOT assume that you should drain the tub after you use it. Find out what your family prefers to do with the bath water after use.

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## Introduction to Japanese Food



The Japanese cook primarily with seafood, vegetables, and rice. Traditionally, and partially influenced by Buddhism and the fact that Japan is surrounded by the sea, the Japanese diet included hardly any animal meat, poultry, dairy products, or oils and fats. When raw seafood is eaten in Japan, much attention is given to its freshness and the necessity that it is cut only by an adept hand with a very sharp knife. Since the natural flavor and color of food is most preferred in Japan, food is prepared with few heavy spices or seasonings. The main seasonings and herbs used include: “fermented products of soybeans, such as soy sauce (*shoyu*) and *miso* (soy bean paste), or of rice, such as *sake*, vinegar, and *mirin* (sweet sake),” ... “*kinome* (aromatic sprigs of the tree known as *sansho*), *yuzu* (citron), *wasabi* (Japanese horseradish), ginger, *myoga* (a plant similar to ginger), and dried and ground *sansho* seeds” (Kodansha Intl. 343-44).

The Japanese often consider the process of making their food and arranging it so it has “visual appeal” an art. Much attention is given to colors, shapes, and textures, as well as the pairing of the food to suitable serving dishes, which are often correlated to a particular season. One example of summertime dishes are bamboo or glass, which gives a person a “cool, fresh feeling.” Sometimes each person may be served many dishes containing small amounts of a variety of foods. The goal is to create an “artistic arrangement [that] is meant to be food for the soul, making the meal more appetizing and inspiring a certain appreciation and Thanksgiving for the food” (Allen and Watanabe 60).

Perhaps you expect to see foods such as *sushi* and rice in Japan. These are both important foods, but there is an extensive variety of other foods as well. The following

paragraphs describe a sampling of the variety of foods found in Japan.

There are many categories of Japanese dishes that includes frequently eaten foods such as soups (*shirumono*), grilled foods including fish, shellfish, meat, and vegetables (*yakimono*), stewed dishes (*nimono*), deep-fried foods (*agemono*), steamed foods (*mushimono*), “vinegared” fish or vegetables (*sunomono*), fish or vegetables with a dressing (*aemono*), a molded dish made with a gelatin (*yosemono*), foods that have been mashed into a paste (*nerimono*), a rice dish to which other ingredients are added (*gohammono*), several varieties of noodle dishes (*menrui*), and *nebemono*, which are foods cooked in simmering broth at the table, where each person cooks what they want from a variety of ingredients (Kodansha Intl. 344-47). *Toshikoshi-soba* is a long buckwheat noodle in a broth that includes vegetables. The long noodle often symbolizes “longevity” (Allen and Watanabe 120).

Special foods eaten during the time of New Year’s celebrations are called “*Osechi-ryōri*.” *Osechi* are cold foods that are made before New Year’s for the purpose of enjoying the food on the holiday rather than having to cook. This food is generally placed in a *jūbako*, which is a special “three- or four-tiered lacquered or porcelain box.” There are several foods that are commonly included in *osechi* dishes. A “thick mixture of chestnuts and sugar to which Japanese sweet potatoes are sometimes added” is called *kurikinton*. A dish you can make by rolling up a filling of fish or other meat in a *konbu* (a type of sea vegetable) and tying it with a long thin strip of dried gourd (*kanpyō*) is called *konbu-maki*. The *konbu* rolls are usually cooked in a mixture of soy sauce, sugar, and fish stock. Another *osechi* dish, called *renkon*, includes lotus roots which can be cooked in a mixture of fish stock, soy sauce, and sugar, or pickled in a mixture of vinegar, sugar, and red food coloring (Allen and Watanabe 114).

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- When eating Japanese dishes, DO eat with chopsticks (*hashi*). Even when eating Japanese soups, eat the solid ingredients with chopsticks and sip the broth out of the bowl (Kodansha Intl. 347).
  - DO NOT place chopsticks vertically into a bowl of rice. In Japan, this gesture is used when a person sacrifices a bowl of food for ancestor worship, which is a Buddhist practice (Safe and Sound vol. 1).
  - DO NOT take food directly from another person's chopsticks with your own chopsticks (Safe and Sound vol. 1).
  - DO turn your chopsticks around to get food from a common dish in the center of the table. Some families may indicate that this is not necessary, in which case you can just take the food normally.
  - When eating Western-style food, DO eat with “Western” utensils.
  - DO NOT accept food on the first offer if you are not in a family situation. It is considered inconsiderate (Allen and Watanabe 163).
  - DO say “*itadakimasu*” before eating. Literally translated, it means, “I will receive it” (Safe and Sound vol. 1).
  - DO let others pour your drinks. DO pour others’ drinks for them. DO NOT hold another person’s glass and pour. Instead, you should let them hold their own glass while you pour their drink (Safe and Sound vol. 1).
  - DO reach for what you want at the table (Safe and Sound vol. 1).
  - DO NOT be surprised when someone else is eating noisily. In fact, it is often considered polite to slurp noodles and chew loudly. It is an

acknowledgment that the food is tasty (Safe and Sound vol. 1).

- When eating at a restaurant and you want the attention of your waiter, DO catch the waiter's attention with your eyes and then "dip" your head in a downward direction (Axtell 182).

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### Gift-giving



When associating with others in Japan, the giving of gifts is of great significance. It is important for guests to give small gifts to their host. It is also critical that a person match the kind and price of gifts to the appropriate occasion and in particular, pay attention to status relationships when giving gifts (Allen and Watanabe 45, 52).

In Japan there are certain times of the year in which it is customary to give gifts, particularly to superiors. People often feel an obligation and “social duty” to give gifts during the two main gift giving seasons. The first one, called *ochūgen*, occurs near the middle of the year, and the second one, called *oseibo*, occurs around the end of the year. During these gift-giving seasons, it is customary to give gifts to anyone who has already done a favor for you, and therefore, it is not necessary for them to return a gift (Allen and Watanabe 52).

There are also other occasions where it is customary to give gifts, such as birth, coming of age, marriage, death, illness, or when parting. Sometimes even if someone is going to visit a friend at their home it is customary to bring them a gift. It has also become popular for someone going on a one-day trip to bring home souvenirs for their family and friends (Allen and Watanabe 52).

Sometimes in Japan there are occasions for giving gifts of thanks at the beginning of a relationship in which you expect to receive a lot of assistance for an extended period of time. Relationships in which this situation might occur would include being a student of a traditional arts teacher or a guest of a host family. Usually when giving gifts in a host family situation, it is better to give gifts to the entire family rather than to separate family members (Allen and Watanabe 53).



Traditionally, it has been fairly common for people to give gifts of food. Many other items, however, may also be given. On New Year's Day, money is currently the prevalent gift for children (Allen and Watanabe 52-53).

New Year's Day is an important time for people to visit their family and friends and to "pay their respects and exchange good wishes for the year" (Allen and Watanabe 134). It is also a very busy day for the post office. Every year, people send dozens or even hundreds of New Year's cards (*nengajō*), which are similar to post cards, to their family, friends, acquaintances, and even business customers. The post office begins delivery of the *nengajō* on New Year's Day. You can buy *nengajō* already printed, or perhaps even design your own (Allen and Watanabe 133-34).

Not only is choosing a gift that is appropriately valuable important, but how you wrap and give the gift is also something to pay special attention to. There are certain colors of wrapping that should be used according to the occasion. In addition, each gift should have the appropriate color of *mizuhiki*, or tie, either bound around the gift or printed on the wrapping paper. For example, if you had a formal, happy occasion, you would use white paper and red and white ties. In the case of a wedding, the *mizuhiki* should be gold and silver. If it were a more dismal occasion, you would use a gray and white or black and white *mizuhiki*. Even in the case where only money is given, the envelope would have a *mizuhiki* imprinted on it, and you would not give dirty or creased money (Allen and Watanabe 53).

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- DO realize the importance of giving gifts in Japan.
- DO choose appropriate gifts according to the occasion and status relationships of those involved.
- DO choose appropriate wrapping and presentation styles for gifts.

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## Speaking



The strong sense of hierarchy found in the general society is not only reflected in social relationships, but it is also reflected in the Japanese language. A higher level of politeness is used to signify more respect, formality, and social distance among speakers. The plain form of the language is spoken with the “inside” group, such as in interactions with family or close friends. When there is more “psychological and emotional distance” between two people who do not know each other, honorific forms of speech are used. Some examples of situations that call for honorific forms are introductions and formal social situations such as business meetings or weddings (Allen and Watanabe 31).

There is a difference in the common language spoken by men and women. The feminine language, commonly referred to as “*kyoseigo*” or “*onna kotoba*,” includes less formal self reference terms, language that demonstrates gentle assurance, and unique interjections and exclamatory vocabulary. Also, since it is necessary for females to be polite in most situations, honorific and formal speech patterns are used more often by females (Kodansha Intl. 300).

When using the Japanese language in various social situations, be alert to the social status of all those involved in the conversation and those talked about in the conversation. It is necessary to pay attention to such factors as age, gender, and social status when deciding what to say and how to say it. It is important to use the correct vocabulary and level of speech so as not to upset the social order as prescribed by the Japanese hierarchy system. For example, if you use plain speech, it comes across as informal and abrupt, and should only be used in informal relationships, and never toward a superior. Polite language on the other

hand, is used in more formal situations and towards superiors. There is also a system of honorific language, termed *keigo*, which involves saying the same things by using different vocabulary and levels of speech according to the status of those involved in the conversation. For example, you should use “respectful or exalting forms with reference to an addressee or third person of higher status and humble terms with reference to oneself or a third person who falls into the same category as oneself” (Kodansha Intl. 296). In some situations a meaning you want to convey can be portrayed using three different vocabulary words, depending on whether you need to use a neutral, humble, or exalting word.

It is also important how you say “good-bye” in Japan. Do not be surprised if when you leave, your host waits for your ride, makes sure you are on your way, and then stands there waving until you are out of sight. Since farewells are so important in Japanese culture, there are several different ways of saying “good-bye,” relative to the situation. In a home situation, there are different words used depending on whether you are the one staying or going. When you are leaving, say “*itte kimasu*.” When someone else leaves but you are staying, say “*itte rasshai*.” You may also say something a little different when leaving a friend rather than a superior. When leaving a friend, it is okay to say something to the effect of “see you later,” or “good-bye” (*ja mata*). When leaving a superior, however, it is more polite to say, “*shitsureishimasu*,” which literally means “I am being impolite, or discourteous...” (Safe and Sound vol. 5).

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- When speaking in Japanese, DO be aware of correct levels of politeness and formality, depending on to whom you are speaking.
- DO bow when introducing yourself. This is especially important in any business situation. If the person with whom you are interacting is

familiar with the West, shaking hands may be included in the greeting.

- If you find yourself in a business situation, DO give your business card (print facing the other person) with two hands and a bow, and receive the other person's business card with two hands and a bow.
- When receiving business cards, be sure to look over the card to find out the status of the person you are dealing with; DO NOT simply pocket the card. DO look over the card and admire it even if you cannot read it.
- You may find yourself in situations where there are long periods of silence in which you may begin to feel uncomfortable. DO NOT take this silence personally and DO NOT feel that you must interrupt this silence. The Japanese may be contemplating or just enjoying the silent time as another moment in their day.
- When a Japanese person smiles or laughs it does not necessarily mean they are happy or find something funny. It could also be that these gestures mean embarrassment, anger, confusion, apologies, or sadness (Axtell 182).
- When greeting someone and starting a conversation, DO NOT use the Japanese equivalent of "how are you?" (*O genki desu ka.*). It is awkward for those not familiar with this American greeting. Instead, DO start a conversation by talking about something a little more trivial, such as the weather (Safe and Sound vol. 5).
- If someone asks a casual question, such as "where are you going," DO NOT necessarily give a detailed answer. This is similar to the

American greeting, “how are you?” Unless you know that the person is wanting a detailed answer, DO be vague in response (Safe and Sound vol. 3).

- In America, when we receive some service or thing, we are likely to say “thank you.” In Japan, depending on the situation, this is a little rude. Usually when someone else has been kind enough to do something for you, DO respond by saying “*sumimasen*,” which is translated as “I’m sorry,” or as in this particular case, “I am sorry for your trouble...” (Safe and Sound vol. 5).
- When speaking Japanese, the Japanese generally DO NOT use as many pronouns such as “I,” “he,” or “she.”
- When you must refuse an invitation or some other thing, DO NOT bluntly refuse it by saying you do not want it, or that you can not go to do something at a certain time. Instead, DO hesitate without giving a definite answer; the person to whom you are speaking will understand that you are refusing (Safe and Sound vol. 5).
- If a person answers you with something like “I will think about it,” DO understand that it may mean “no.” It is considered rude to give a blunt “no” as an answer (Culturgram 2).
- When speaking to someone, DO NOT assume that if they say “yes” they are giving an affirmative answer. They may only be indicating that they understand what you are saying (Culturgram 2).
- Not only the way you speak but also the way you listen is considered important in Japan. DO NOT interrupt or talk too much.

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[illegible]

## 日本にで

- ハンカチは暑い時 に顔をふくの為に使 うので鼻 をかまないでください。
- 食 事 や公 衆 の場 で鼻 をかんではいけません。
- 日本人が部屋 にはいる前にノックをしなくてもこっちはいいません。
- 床に座 っておじぎをする時 体の前に両 手を三角作るようにおいておじぎをしましょう。
- 日本で人を呼 ぶ時 は「ちょっと、 ちょっと」と言 いがら手のひらを下に向けて呼 びます。手のひらを上 に向けて呼 ばないでください。
- 女 性がせいざから 足を崩す時は足を組まないでください。 組まないでよこすわりをしましょう。
- 人で混 んでいる公 共の場 以外は人すぐ ばに立 っではいけません。 人前でキス をしたり体をぶれ合 うのは良 くありません。
- 笑ったりあくびをする時 に開いた口 を見 せるのは不作法 です。
- 座 っている時 に椅子 にもたれたりテーブルに足を乗 せてはいけません。 とても不作法 です。
- 膝の上 に足首を乗 せて靴 の こを見 せるのは無礼 ですから、 いけません。
- 日本では結 果 よりやり方のほうが重 要 です。



## 日本のホストファミリー

- ホストファミリーの日常生活を乱さないようにしましょう。
- ホストファミリーの行動を見て例にしたいしましょう。

## 日本の家

- 玄関で靴を脱ぎましょう。脱いだ靴は爪先をドアに向けて置きましょう。スリッパがあればはきましょう。
- 畳の上でスリッパをはいてはいけません。
- とても高価なので畳のかたを踏まないてください。
- 床の間に立ったり自分の物を置いたりしないでください。
- 燃料と電気は無駄使いしないでください。
- アメリカ式のトイレにあるボタンの使い方がわからない時は押さないてください。
- トイレのスリッパはトイレ以外でははかないでください。

## 入浴

- 体は湯船の外で洗いまじょう。
- 日本の湯船は漬かるだけなので湯船の中で石鹸を使わないでください。

- )

## 贈り物

- 日本で贈り物は大事です。
- 適切な包装や送る機会を選びましょう。
- 両手で贈り物を渡しましょう。
- 贈り物を渡す時に「自分で作りました」や「気に入っています」等と言わない。「つまらない物ですが。。。等と言いましょう。

## 会 話

- 日本語を話す時は敬語を正しく使うようにしましょう。
- 自己紹介をする時はおじぎをしましょう。ビジネスの時は特に大切です。最近は握手をする場合もあります。
- 名刺は両手でおじぎをしながら渡しましょう。受け取る時と同じです。
- 名刺をもらった時はすぐにポケットに入れないで名刺を見て、人の地位を確認してください。読まなくても読んだ振りをしてください。
- 会話の途中でちんもくがあっても気にしないでください。日本人は考えていたりちんもくを楽しんだりします。
- 日本人がほほえんでいたり、笑っていても楽しいからとは限りません。恥ずかしかったり怒っていたり混乱していたり悲しい

時でも笑います。

- 人と話をする時 アメリカのように「お元気ですか」と言わないで代わりに「いいお天気ですね」等のさしさわりのないあいつちをしましょう。
- 日本語で「どこに行くの」はエイ語で「お元気ですか」と同じような質問だから曖昧に答えてもいい。
- アメリカでサビスを受ける時や物をもらう時は「有りがとう」と言います。でも日本では「すみません」と言ってください。
- 日本語を話す時には「私」、「彼」、「彼女」等の代名詞をあまり言わない。
- 招待や物を断わる時は不作法に「出来ない」と言わないでください。あいまいに答えれば断わっていると分かります。
- 日本語で「考えて見ます」は「いいえ」という意味です。いいえと答えるのは不作法です。
- 会話の中で相手が「はい」と言ってもこうていの意味ではなく理解したと言う意味です。
- 日本では話し方だけではなく聞き方も大切です。話をさえぎったり話しすぎてはいけません。
- 電話でメッセージを受ける時「はい、はい」とたくさん言ってもいい。
- ホストファミリーの物をほめ過ぎるのは恥ずかしがらせたり何か上げなくてはと言う気にさせるので良くありません。

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